

# CHINA MOUNTAIN

WIND POWER PROJECT EIS

NEWSLETTER 3  
DECEMBER 2009

BLM

## Background

This is the third in a series of newsletters to keep you informed about the China Mountain Wind Power Project (Proposed Project). The Proposed Project would involve the construction of a 425-megawatt wind power facility in Twin Falls County, Idaho and Elko County, Nevada. The Proposed Project would include land managed by several entities, including the Bureau of Land Management (BLM, 65%), Idaho State Department of Lands (7%), and private owners (28%).

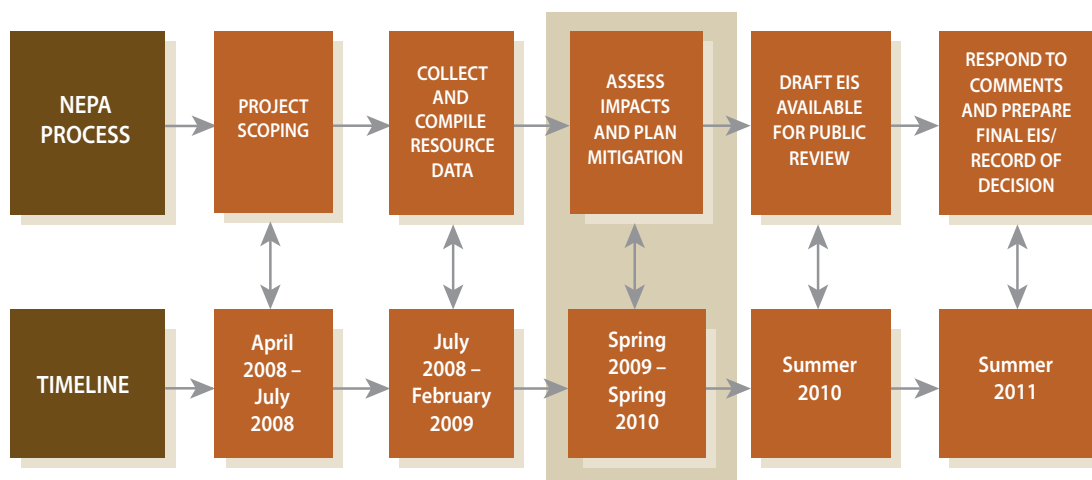
As stated in the previous newsletters, the Jarbidge Field Office of the BLM is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to assess the impact that the construction and operation of the proposed facilities could have on natural and cultural resources and local communities. The EIS is being prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act and associated regulations. This newsletter provides an update on where we are in the EIS process, explains the need for a potential Resource Management Plan amendment, and lays out the next steps in the process. For more information, or to review the previous project newsletters, please visit the project website at: [http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/planning/china\\_mountain\\_wind.html](http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/planning/china_mountain_wind.html).

## Where are we in the EIS process?

The flow chart below shows the EIS process and estimated schedule. The purpose of the first step in the process, project scoping, is to identify questions, issues, and concerns from Tribes, other State or Federal agencies, and the public. The input received during scoping provides direction for developing and conducting the EIS studies and identifies issues that the EIS should address. Since public scoping, the project team has been collecting data on land uses and other resources in the project area to better understand the local environment. This information has been gathered from existing documents and reports, maps, agency files or databases, and field surveys.

The project team is currently developing alternatives to the Proposed Project, including a no action alternative. These alternatives include different scenarios for constructing a wind power facility at China Mountain and will be described and considered in the EIS. The project team is also evaluating the resource information collected over the past year to determine and estimate impacts on the environment that could result from the Proposed Project. Once potential impacts are identified, resource specialists will disclose these impacts in the EIS.

### WE ARE HERE



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# CHINA MOUNTAIN WIND POWER PROJECT EIS

## What's next?

The next step of the China Mountain Wind Power Project is to document the results of the project resource studies in the Draft EIS. We anticipate the Draft EIS will be available for public and agency review in summer of 2010. During the review period, the BLM will conduct additional public meetings to solicit comments on the Draft EIS. These meetings will be announced in a future newsletter, on the project website, and in local media outlets. After the review period closes, the BLM will compile and review all substantive comments received on the Draft EIS and prepare responses to those comments for inclusion in a Final EIS.



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## Meteorological Towers EA

In an effort to collect additional wind speed data on China Mountain, China Mountain Wind LLC proposed to construct three additional, temporary meteorological towers under a separate application and action. The BLM prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) (ID-210-2008-284) for the proposed towers. Members of the public reviewed the EA in spring 2009 and, based on comments received, the BLM revised the EA. On October 30, 2009, the BLM issued a Finding of No Significant Impact and a decision notice authorizing two of the three proposed temporary towers. One proposed meteorological tower was not authorized due to potential impacts to cultural and visual resources, and potential effects of siting the meteorological tower on intact sagebrush habitat. The EA, the Finding of No Significant Impact, and the Decision Notice are available on the project web site [http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/planning/china\\_mountain\\_wind.html](http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/planning/china_mountain_wind.html).

## Potential Plan Amendment: Why is it Needed?

On October 15, 2009, the BLM published a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register, "To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement and a Possible Land Use Plan Amendment to the Jarbidge Resource Management Plan for the Proposed China Mountain Wind Project." This NOI is available on the project website listed above.

The 1987 Jarbidge Resource Management Plan (RMP) is the current land use plan for the Jarbidge Field Office. The RMP provides broad management direction for the entire Field Office including direction for rights-of-way applications like the proposed China Mountain wind project.

In the fall of 2005, the BLM began a process to revise the 1987 RMP, including preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The original project time line for the RMP revision called for completion of the new RMP/EIS by the Fall of 2009. Due to large wildfires, litigation and other unforeseen delays, the BLM has extended the RMP revision time line to the Fall of 2011. The 1987 RMP remains in effect until the BLM completes the RMP revision process with a Record of Decision.

When the BLM received the right-of-way application for the proposed China Mountain project in 2007, we anticipated that the RMP revision would be completed almost two years before the time a decision was made on the China Mountain project. Therefore, the BLM planned to make a decision on the proposed China Mountain project under the revised RMP instead of under the existing 1987 RMP.

The time line for the China Mountain Project is starting to surpass that of the RMP revision. The NOI for a potential plan amendment to the 1987 RMP acknowledges this situation. If it was determined to be necessary, an amendment to the 1987



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RMP would allow the BLM to make a timely decision on the China Mountain project under the 1987 RMP instead of waiting for the RMP revision. In all potential scenarios and time-lines, the BLM will closely coordinate the decision on the China Mountain project with the RMP revision process.

## Other Opportunities for Public Comment

The BLM will provide other opportunities throughout the process to discuss the status of the project. The BLM will ask you to review the Draft EIS, which will be released to the public for comment. If you are interested in a presentation for your service club or organization, please contact us. Comments regarding the proposed China Mountain Wind Power Project should be sent to:

**Project Manager  
China Mountain Wind Power Project EIS  
Bureau of Land Management  
Jarbidge Field Office  
2536 Kimberly Road  
Twin Falls, Idaho 83301**

Comments via email may be sent to: [id\\_chinamtn\\_eis@blm.gov](mailto:id_chinamtn_eis@blm.gov).

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised that your comment - including your personal identifying information - may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

For additional information, and to be added or deleted from the mailing list, contact Project Manager, Jarbidge Field Office at (208) 735-2060, or visit the website at [http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/planning/china\\_mountain\\_wind.html](http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/planning/china_mountain_wind.html).



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Top of China Mountain looking south

# WIND POWER PROJECT EIS



***China Mountain Project Area Vicinity***

Bureau of Land Management  
Jarbridge Field Office  
2536 Kimberly Road  
Twin Falls, Idaho 83301

